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ABSTRACT

As part of a project to develop an inservice teacher education program, teacher competencies critical to working with handicapped children were identified. Five competencies were selected which include flexibility in carrying out instructional program, sensitivity to and acceptance of individual differences in children, and individualizing instruction based on prescription and consideration for the child's abilities as well as disabilities. Other project activities were a survey and evaluation of available teacher training materials, design and implementation of a training model with 12 regular classroom teachers, and selection of materials and the development of training plans. (SBH)

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PERSONNEL TRAINING TO FACILITATE MAINSTREAMING

*Design of Instruction for Classroom Teachers
Serving Handicapped Children*

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CEC PRESENTATION

The need for teacher training in Jackson County was first assessed in October, 1975, when a questionnaire was sent to all school personnel in the county. It was returned by all levels of staff: 33 administrators, 288 regular class teachers, 42 special teachers, and 8 paraprofessionals. Seventy-three percent of the 392 personnel that responded were regular class teachers. The questionnaire was also returned by personnel working with all grade levels, kindergarten through high school.

The areas of assistance desired were first of all, individualized instruction and secondly, behavior management. Training in diagnosis, an understanding of the characteristics of handicapped children, and other areas were also requested. The most requested types of assistance were inservice training and reimbursed training time. Other types of assistance desired were visitation, consultation and pre-service training.

The need for training regular school staff has also been expressed by specialists and parents. Educational Resource Center teachers have often expressed the regret that regular classroom teachers were not always consistent nor did they always follow the specialists' recommendations regarding the handicapped child's academic and social needs. Our concern was in making the optimum success of the time spent by the child in the regular class. Parents of handicapped children have occasionally been upset by the indifferent and sometimes poor attitudes of the classroom teacher toward their child.

Following the training questionnaire, a grant proposal was written by members of the Intermediate Education District staff and Herb Prehm from the University of Oregon for BEH funds. The rationale for the proposal was based on:

1. The priority stated by BEH to train regular classroom teachers to work with handicapped students,
2. The evidence of a training need assessed by the questionnaire,
3. The complement of a training program to an already on-going, and successful, mainstreaming program.

We were fortunate to receive funding for a one-year Planning Grant, which began this fall. The goals of our Planning Year were:

1. To identify teacher competencies critical to working with handicapped children,
2. To survey and evaluate available teacher training materials,
3. To design and implement a training model with 12 classroom teachers from various sites in the county,
4. To write a proposal for BEH monies to fund a three-year training program that would provide training to a large proportion of school personnel in the entire county.

We are being assisted in all of the project goals by our cooperative relationship with the state institution of higher education, the University of Oregon. Our project consultant is Herb Prehm from the Department of Special Education. He assisted in writing the proposal and has been a valuable source of information regarding other teacher training projects across the United States.

The first goal of the Planning Year was to identify important teacher competencies. The first step of this process was to write to various Deans' Grant Projects across the country. We requested three things: (1) teacher competencies they had identified, (2) training procedures and

materials, (3) what pupil performance measures were used to evaluate the effect of the training. All of the projects who responded sent lists of teacher competencies. Many of them sent teaching activities and materials. None of them sent information regarding pupil performance measures. It would seem that very few, if any, teacher training projects use pupil performance as a measure of the effect of training, so pupil performance was taken into consideration, when we wrote the three-year grant.

After receiving many lists of competencies from various Deans' Grant Projects, the second step of the process was compiling the lists, combining like skills into one skill statement and rewriting them to a standard form.

The third step of the process was to have regular classroom teachers - with experience working with handicapped children - evaluate the competencies. We asked several resource teachers in the county to identify teachers in their building they considered to be successful in working with mildly handicapped children. We then asked 12 of these classroom teachers to select the competencies from the compiled list they considered crucial to teaching the low achiever and to cross out those they considered irrelevant. This was done through a personal interview with each teacher. The classroom teachers were also asked to add competencies they felt were important.

The competencies the classroom teachers selected, in their order of importance, are:

1. Demonstrates flexibility in carrying out a program of instruction... to accommodate the needs and capitalize on the strengths of mainstreamed exceptional children.
2. Demonstrates sensitivity to and acceptance of individual differences in children.

3. Demonstrates commitment to the principle that social and personal development are equally as important as academic achievement to the exceptional child.
4. Individualizes instruction based on prescription and consideration for the child's abilities as well as disabilities.
5. Identifies the manner in which the peer group influences each individual in the group, and to direct and participate in group processes in order to enhance the participation of mainstreamed exceptional children.

To the five competencies chosen by the regular classroom teachers, we added three competencies of our own dealing with specific good teaching practices to use with handicapped children and the philosophical and legal reasons for mainstreaming. These competencies were sorted into four training areas:

1. Attitudes Toward Mainstreaming and Handicapped Children
2. Good Teaching Practices to Use with Handicapped Children
3. Individualized Instruction
4. Social Peer Influences/Behavior Management

The competencies chosen by the classroom teachers were left in the same form as they were stated and selected by the teachers. Since the competencies were stated in somewhat general terms, we wrote specific performance objectives under each competency. For example, specific objectives under the competency, "Individualizes instruction based on prescription..." are:

1. Writes a behavioral objective with its five basic parts.
2. Writes a task analysis or concept analysis.
3. Constructs an effective teaching plan in the Model-(Lead)-Test pattern.

Evaluation measures were also identified for each competency. For the unit in Attitudes Toward Mainstreaming, we chose the Rucker-Gable Educational Programming Scale as a pre/post measure of teacher attitudes. (The Rucker-Gable was also administered to a control group of classroom teachers who were not selected for the project.)

Evaluation of Good Teaching Practices was done through direct observation of the participating teachers in their classrooms. This involved designing an observation form, hiring and training five part-time observers, and scheduling observation times with the participating teachers. Observations focused on five areas:

1. Giving clear, concise cues,
2. Keeping student interest through fast pacing,
3. Giving immediate, appropriate consequences,
4. Maintaining a success-oriented environment (determined by comparing the number of positive to negative consequences delivered by the teacher),
5. Using an effective correction procedure.

Individualized Instruction was measured by a self-assessment package designed by Barry Dollar. The teachers were asked to identify the descriptor that best described their current level of individualization in content, style, rate, and environment. Skills in writing an individual prescriptive program were measured by a written pre/posttest.

Social Peer Influences and Behavior Management was measured by responses to a teacher interview.

Simultaneous to the tasks of identifying competencies and selecting evaluation measures was the process of selecting the 12 participants. The project was first presented to the district superintendents in the county for their approval. This was followed by a letter to the building principals, asking them to recommend teachers who would be interested in the project and who would benefit from the training. Letters were sent to all teachers who were recommended. The letter described the inservice training class and offered the participants three graduate credits through the Division of Continuing Education at no cost to them. Of those teachers who responded, 12 participants were chosen by random selection. Consideration was given to the size of the district, i.e. five participants were chosen from the largest district, and only one from the smallest. The participants were contacted and baseline observations were begun. Each teacher was observed for three 15-minute intervals in their own classroom.

The results of the observations showed that almost all of our participants delivered clear cues and directions. Fifty-eight percent of them delivered appropriate consequences at the 90% criterion level. Most of the consequences delivered by the participants were somewhat neutral in form, e.g. saying, "okay", nodding, and repeating the child's answer. Two-thirds of the participants maintained a success-oriented environment delivering four positive (or positive/neutral) consequences for every negative consequence. Only 42% of the participants used an effective correction procedure. Pacing among all the participants was somewhat slow, averaging approximately 2.8 student responses per minute.

Another activity of the project staff was the selection of materials and the development of training plans. Both Deans' Grant materials and commercial materials were examined. Relevant Educational Resource Center materials were also used when appropriate. Training plans included direct instruction, individual projects, learning stations, and direct consultation in the teacher's classroom. Direct instruction was conducted in the Model-Lead-Test format. Model was loosely defined as explanation and demonstration of the skill by the instructor. This step was followed by a Lead; the trainees practice the skill while being supervised or prompted by the instructor. The Test is the step in which the trainee performs the skill independently, evaluated in a simulation experience in the room or in direct observation in the classroom. Other parts of the training plan include the Set where the skill or concept is introduced and a purpose stated. Materials and Related Skills are also included.

Trainees select their own goals and choose their own projects to individualize instruction in their classrooms. We individualized to their needs by setting up learning stations around the classroom. Eleven learning stations around the room enabled the participants to explore the implementation of learning centers, student contracts, learning activity packets, assessment/evaluation methods, instructional management, learning style and other aspects of individualization. Audio-visual equipment such as films, cassette tapes, videotapes, filmstrips, and overhead transparencies were used in the learning stations.

The class sessions are evaluated by the participants each week. The 12 trainees evaluate:

1. Whether or not the objectives of the class were made clear,
2. Whether the instructor had a firm grasp of the content,
3. Whether the activities were appropriate,
4. Whether their opinions were respected,
5. Whether the evaluation measure was appropriate.

The trainees are also asked to list what they have learned and how they will apply these skills in their classroom. This is the most important part of the evaluation because it prompts the participants to make decisions that will affect their classroom. They are also asked to make suggested changes and to indicate their overall feeling toward the class.

At the end of the training period, the participants will be posttested on the training objectives. Each teacher will again be evaluated by trained observers in their classroom on specific teaching skills. They will assess themselves on the extent to which they have individualized instruction in their classroom. They will be interviewed regarding specific individual and group behavior programs run in their room. Finally, they will be administered the Rucker-Gable scale to measure changes in attitude toward handicapped children.

As project instructor, I feel that the class has been successful. The most encouraging indications of success have been the enthusiastic reports of the participants who have tried the skills discussed in class and found them to work in their classroom. Simulation games we have played have put the participants in situations new to them and have given them insights into the feelings and problems of handicapped learners. Their responses, both on the class evaluation form and verbally have been enthusiastic and encouraging.